

**you're not lost if you found what you wanted.**

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**you're not lost if you found what you wanted.**

by [Unuora](#)

## Summary

The world has a way of putting all the pieces in the right places, if you're willing to try.

Allen and Lucien try falling in love a second time; Jack laughs.

## Notes

I've been working on this for months, and it's about time I stop poking at it and throw it to the vultures.

This was supposed to be short. I'm so in love with these two.

Written in second person because I can't remember a time where I've done otherwise.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

He doesn't look at you. Even through the creak of the iron door, the scuffle of your feet, your long, drawn out sigh, he pointedly pays you no mind. He lies on his cot, looking far more frail and fragile than you ever thought possible, faced away. He's so very, very far away. When you sit down, awkward and out of place on the concrete, you press your hands against the iron bars as if it can soothe the gap between you and him.

"Lu," you say, softly. You do not expect him to respond, and the way he hunches into himself like the word was a physical blow takes the life from your lungs.

“Don’t call me that,” he says without the vigor and fury he meant it to have. He’s tense and terse and he reminds you of a wounded animal. You stay silent. He doesn’t move. You cross your legs and you wait.

“You never gave them your story,” his tone feels measured and you think everything about him is acutely calculated.

“I still think it’s the truth,” you say, not trying to be innocent. You came to profess your sins, there’s no point in hiding behind them.

You wait, and he stays silent.

“How old were you?” you ask quietly. You hate yourself for taking safety in the bars separating you. There’s a few moments where you think the silence will hold through, but he takes a shaky breath.

“Twelve,” he says, resigned. A sick feeling comes over you at his answer. You feel an unrecognizable fury unfurl in you, you feel it swallowing you whole.

“Did you want him?”

“No.” That sick feeling remains, lays heavy in your gut. You think.

“Did you ever want him?”

Silence stretches so long your visitation time is almost up before he speaks. “I don’t know.” There’s something heavy, oppressive about the way he answers and you feel guilty for asking. He answered, you tell yourself, he answered and he didn’t have to. You think briefly about whether this is another tangle of words or if he’s genuinely too worn to care. Both make your hands shake in their consequences.

He turns to you, then, turning over in a measured silence. His eyes sear through you, so raw and unabiding. There are deep, bruisey marks around his neck, fresh. The air around you is an oppressive force, and regret weighs against you so heavy you fear you may break.

In an amount of courage and strength you didn’t think you processed, you stand and walk out, leaving him staring listlessly after you.

When you get home, you stand for a long time, braced against your desk and trying to escape the trembling wracking your arms, hands, knees. You breathe, deep and heavy, and pretend that the emotion you saw in his eyes didn’t cut you quite so deep.

You pretend not to acknowledge how very, very close you were to losing him completely.

“We were so close,” you say, after some time had passed since you sat down at your usual spot. Sometimes he’ll ignore you and sometimes he doesn’t. Sometimes he’ll talk and sometimes he doesn’t. He’s sitting on the floor today, leaned up against the wall. One hand is loosely wrapped around one of the bars and he’s closer to the touch than he ever has been.

“We collided and we were so close. We broke the circle, everything was so much bigger and wider and better and it was only a little bit more before we could’ve had everything,” you’re babbling and you know it. You’re high on regret and sorrow and agony and you know you shouldn’t but the words come anyway. “It was all pulled to its limits and if we fall now we fall on opposite sides. I

don't want to lose you, Lu, I'd do anything to be with you, no, I *did* everything..."

"I don't want you to fall away," you say. You press your forehead against the bars, hunched and pleading, as if you could undo everything out of sheer *want*. "Or is it already too late for that, too?"

You expect that maybe Lucien will yell at the use of his nickname, maybe move away, or the far more likely option that he'll say nothing; do nothing to break this insurmountable barrier between you. But he places his hand on yours, gentle and without any other sign of acknowledgement. You remain like that, with his hand placed against yours until the warden tells you to leave.

Lucien gets up then, curling back into bed like he had never left, facing away. You take a moment to struggle against the onslaught of emotion. The cell's bars became everything you hated, this physical barrier to enhance the emotional one. It made you feel like you were the one behind bars.

You press your forehead to the bars, sighing as an age old weariness overcame you. "Even... Even if it is too late, you changed the world, Lu. Jack, Bill, me, you changed us and we'll remember that forever."

There's a beat of pause, but Lucien turns, warily, to glance at you. You meet his eyes, and there's something there that you can't recognize. You stand clumsily, turn to leave, "So, you'll never be forgotten," you give Lucien a wavering smirk, "Okay?"

And you leave again. Its days before you can muster up the strength to see him again.

The war's over. You bring Lucien the headlines and Lucien stares with wide, longing eyes.

"What's it like out there?"

"It's the perfect day," you say. You think about buying tickets to Paris when Lucien gets out. You bury the idea, quickly, surreptitiously, because as much as you want it will never happen.

When Lucien asks you read the paper, on and on, until it's out of words to say and the little barred window in Lu's cell loses all its light.

"I'm not going to come back after this," you say eventually. You've visited Lucien a number of times, a number of times too many, and the ache in your heart grows. "The libertine circle is broken, so it's time for our lives to get wider, right?" It feels fake and coy in your mouth, it feels like a lie.

You look at him and he looks back at you. You think of this being the last time you'll ever see him and even though he's hurt you, scathed you, wounded you, you think that fact cuts you deeper.

You're two seconds before leaving and he speaks up. "I don't know," Lucien says, voice rough and he slouches against the wall like the defeated.

"What?" You glance back at him briefly. If you hadn't heard him speak so clearly you wouldn't think he was even speaking to you.

"If you try to let go of what you love, it only circles back and returns to you," he says, and he looks at you keenly. You think, maybe, these are pity words for what could've been.

“Or it destroys you,” you finish, not meeting his eyes. You know this, what’s the point.

You think, idly, that David was Lu’s circle and you wonder whether it destroyed him or not. You think of Lucien, of who he is, what he’s like, and you think he’s already destroyed you so there’s no point in him coming back.

You leave with a heavy weight in your gut and a tinge of doubt in your mind. Completely impossible, he’d said when he relayed to you Yeats Vision. It’s up to God, you suppose. It’s up to Lu. Might as well be the same thing to you, if faith’s involved.

You published a book.

You didn’t realize how quickly two years could pass, but before you know it you’re sorting through bills and papers and notes when you find it.

*Lucien Carr*, says the letter and you would’ve suspected mockery if it weren’t for his neat, elegant hand. When you had left the jail that last day you thought that you couldn’t wait for the moment Lucien got out of jail. Now that it’s here, now, you’re not sure how much you care.

You were infatuated with Lucien Carr, infatuated with a man who took you from the sheltered, quiet life of Paterson, New Jersey and took you to the wild, unclaimed land of the city. He showed you what the world was capable of, good and bad, and he put the stars in your eyes. But it was infatuation. You don’t know who Lucien Carr is anymore, and you doubt you ever did.

*Ginsy*, the letter is addressed. You think you should feel indignation at that but you just feel fond.

*The complete passage is:*

*“Some things, once you’ve loved them, become part of you  
and if you try to let them go, they only circle back and return you  
or they destroy you.”*

He doesn’t even sign it, and that’s the end of the letter. You stand for a moment unsure of how exactly to react. So, he brings up that poem again. You wrote it. It was the last thing you said to each other, you remember that much, but so what?

You don’t know who Lucien Carr is, but honestly, you’ve always kind of wanted to find out.

You picked up the phone to call his dorm only to realize how stupid that would be. You stand there, with the phone in your hand, and the operator grousing at you on the other line.

“Sir?” She asks with more than an edge of impatience.

“Oh, uh,” you say, stutteringly. You try to think quickly, “A man named Lucien Carr used to live in Manhattan, in Colombia’s overflow apartments. His mother, Marion Carr lived in Brooklyn. I was wondering if you could find out either of their current locations.”

You spend three hours being forwarded to an assortment of locations, asking questions and in the end all you have is a letter without a return address.

You phone Jack the next day and he comes down to meet you for coffee. You're ten minutes early and relentlessly jittery when he walks through the door. He gives you a twitch of a smile and sits down across from you expectantly.

"I'm guessin' this ain't one of our usual meetings," he says. The waitress comes over and he brusquely orders a black coffee. He's in a bad mood, you note.

You wordlessly push over the letter Lucien sent you. He picks it up and opens it with slight hesitation. He glances at you with an odd look that disappears as soon as he sees the return address. He reads the letter and the heavy gloom that resided over him faded away with every passing word.

"He's out?" is the first thing he asks. He looks inquisitive, and... hopeful, almost. You take comfort in the fact that you're not the only one who's excited that the concept of seeing Lu again, even after what he'd done.

"Yeah," you say, "Eighteen months. He's been out for about six now." You have no idea what he's been doing since then, no idea why he waited so long to send you anything if he intended to do so from the beginning.

"No shit," Jack says. He looks a little shocked, and he mulls over this information for a little. "D'ya know where he is now? Can't believe he didn't bother to even stop by. I'm sure William's itching to see him again, too."

"No," you say a bit glumly, "There's not even a return address. I have no idea why he'd even bother to send me that. I don't even know if he's in New York anymore."

"Dunno," Jack says. The waitress gives him his coffee. He gives her a smirk and flirts with her for a moment. His mood's improved, you note. You let yourself smile a bit. "This a good thing?" he asks after the waitress leaves.

"Dunno," you reply. You think for a moment. "Maybe it is. Maybe he'll... circle back and return to us."

"Well he sure ain't going to destroy us," Jack says gruffly into his drink, "He tried that once and I got married and you published a book."

You laugh a bit. He grins slyly from behind his cup. You drink your coffee.

You had tried to find Lu after that. You asked around, bars he used to go to, Columbia, even the jail itself for some hints, but in the end you'd come up empty. Bartenders looked puzzled, the warden gave you an apathetic shrug, and even some Columbia professors denied teaching Lucien at all. The world had seemed to forget him. New York forgot him.

The very notion was so absurd it just drove you to keep trying, to prove that Lucien was here and that he meant something. There was that bit of rebellion in you that just screamed to prove the world wrong.

Though, after empty leads and overwhelming silence, eventually the letter was buried under papers and bills and poems, and your search went with it. It was a lingering thought, a buzz in the back of your mind. You thought about him, but not always.

You were talking to Burroughs on the phone one day, talking about poems and literature and your

book when you brought it up without really thinking of it.

“I received a letter from Lucien the other day,” you said, and William stayed silent, so you kept going, “No return address, no signature, just a poem.”

“I showed it to Jack,” you continue when William still says nothing, “It seemed to cheer him up a bit. I think he’s having a rough time lately.”

“Allen,” William stops your rambling, “How long ago was this?”

“Uh,” you say, “About a month ago. Six weeks. Sorry, I figured he’d try to reach out to you too eventually.”

“Allen,” William repeats, and if one could frown in concern over the phone, he was definitely doing it now, “Jail changes people, but if he’s anything like himself don’t expect anything more from him.”

You let that settle into silence. You’re not sure what to say to that, but William takes the lead again.

“Even if he does return, don’t expect the same kid with the key to wonderland. I’d warn you not to get involved again, but I know you won’t listen.”

You broke out in a small smile at that, “Was Lu ever someone to *expect* things from?” Williams doesn’t reply, and you sigh, “I know, Bill. Be wary. It’s... it’s okay. I’m okay.”

Whatever Bill was looking for he seemed to find it, because without another word he was back to talking about a new book he’d read, some little tidbit of information he heard over the radio, something irrelevant and that was the end of it.

Publishing books is a great deal harder than it should be.

You’ve sent the draft in to a publishing company, and since the building is right down the road from your new apartment you just walk instead of getting the paperwork mailed. Easier. Quicker. Something to get rid some of the restless energy of *just wanting this damn book published already*.

When you walk into the building, it’s generic, it’s institutionalized. It reminds you of your old lecture halls. Lots of rules and brick walls.

A lady at the main desk directs you to a tiny room on the east side of the building. You knock on the door and it swings open lightly. Hesitating a moment, it becomes evident no one is going to invite you in, you peak your head in.

There’s a man standing at a desk, talking brusquely on the phone, hushed too quiet for you to hear. He’s dressed in a long black trench coat that makes him look taller and more important than he is. He’s faced away from you and you hear a harsh exhale of breath as he hangs up the phone with a bit too much vigor.

“Excuse me,” you say, sensing this is your opportunity, “I was sent for a file of revisions. Allen Ginsburg?”

The man turns and he looks less cross than you were expecting and a great deal more familiar than you were expecting. A grin spreads across your face, and Christ, it’s Lucien. He looks so different.

He looks like an adult. He looks weary and worn down and much more jaded than he should ever be, but it's Lucien. It's Lucien.

You both freeze. A moment in time frozen for much more than a moment.

"Hi," you say, fear and giddiness choking words from you. You're sure you look shellshocked, but he doesn't seem to notice.

"Hi," he says. He's got the deer in headlights look, blank face and head reeling. He looks like he's not sure what card to play. You idly note that his reaction is mildly discomforted instead of violently angry, so you count that as good.

"You got a job," is what you say instead of the million other things you want to. There's a split second where Lucien looks confused, offended almost, and then he laughs and he still laughs like old Lucien used to laugh.

"I'm not a writer, I'll leave that up to you and Jack," Lu says, "I figured this was as close as I could get." He says it with a smile, but you fight the urge to frown.

Your mind says *You were always a writer, you were just too afraid to write* but your mouth says: "You're still in Manhattan. I thought you left. It was like you just disappeared."

His face sinks at that, and he gives a little huff of a sigh. "I could never leave New York. But I had to leave Columbia and the rest of all that behind."

You think of the letter, and you think of Lucien looking so frightfully young and fragile behind bars as you read the paper. *The Liberation of Paris* it had read, bold, black letters that spelled a brilliant future. "Does that include me?" You ask him, with a bit of a hesitant smile. *Was that letter a goodbye, or a second chance*, you ask without words.

His hands are in his pockets now, and maybe he looks a little defensive, or maybe not. "Depends," he says with a small quirk to his lips. He rifles around in the pile of folders on his desk for a moment, procuring a manila folder with your name scribbled on the side. He hands it to you with that same lingering smirk. He puts a firm hand on your shoulder, then he walks out the door without another word.

You stay dismayed and slightly put off long after you returned to your apartment with the folder. You had opened it with flourish, grumpily deciding that any man named Lucien Carr should stay out of your life if he was going to be that way. Working irritably, you're hip deep into paperwork before you pay any mind to the little paper rectangle paper clipped to the folder.

It was a business card. Concise, far from ornate, but you realize it's *Lucien's* business card.

You stop short, brain crashing to a halt like a derailed train. It's got a phone number on it, an address, everything. Did he *mean* that, or was it just a business necessity?

You don't *know*. If he hadn't spent the last two years in jail you'd think he's doing this on purpose.

You're halfway to reaching for the phone when you realize how *ridiculous* this is. He's toying with you.

You hesitate, and you don't call.

You decide, finally, to just leave it at that. The next time you go to organize paperwork for your book, you'll surely see him. Surely.

And, unsurprisingly, you do. He says nothing about the letter, about the business card, about you or Columbia. It's strictly business. He is uptight and serious and he is nothing like he was before.

You spot a copy of *Leaves of Grass* on his desk, and you think, maybe not.

"Whitman?" you ask lightly, when you're just about your way out the door.

You catch a brief smile before he hides it. "The dirty bastard was always a good read."

He's standing by the door, and you pass him on your way out. You pull a slip of paper out of your pocket and you hand it to him as you pass. He takes it unquestioningly. It's got your number and address on it. "Stop in for a drink sometime, yeah?" With that, you move out the door and you're gone.

Your ball, Carr, you think. Two can play at that game. This time it's your playing field.

You don't expect him to ever call, but he does. He calls, and you're a bit surprised he called so soon. It's not two days later before you pick up the phone to find him on the other line.

"Afraid?" he asks, and you scoff a little.

"No. Unsure."

"Nothing to be unsure about. A number is a number. A proposition is a proposition. Unless something's changed since the last time I checked."

"Unless it isn't."

"Then it's not. Drinks on me?"

Somehow, you end up at his place, a small, disaster of an apartment on the seventh floor. He motions for you to take a seat at one of the chairs in the kitchen as he rifles through cabinets. He procures two glasses and a bottle of whisky. He hits the radio before he plops down in a chair next to you.

He pours you a glass, and he tips his head back and downs his drink. You follow suit. It burns on the way down, and he smiles crookedly at you.

"Still with a penchant for drinking," you comment. There's a newspaper on the table, and you pretend to glance at it as he taps to the beat of the song.

"Not really," he says casually. He pulls out a cigarette from his pocket, and offers you one. You take one, feeling nostalgic. He leans close when he lights it for you. "Haven't drunk much lately."

"Really?" You're apprehensive at best. Two and a half years ago, he was an alcoholic kleptomaniac even on good days.

He laughs a little, "I'm a reformed man, Allen." He gives a smirk, and there's that glint in his eye again. "I only lead a life full of atonement, goodwill and all that."

"Then, this?" you gesture to the once full, unopened bottle of whisky.

"All for the occasion," he says, and you smirk back.

Minutes, hours later, you've fallen back into a familiar routine. Lu's cracking jokes and making scathing remarks, and you laugh with him. You've talked about jobs, current events, poets, people, a dozen other topics before the both of you have demolished most of the bottle.

Lu is looking sufficiently woozy before he drags you into his living room and flops down on the couch. You're not sure how he's awake. You drank far less than him and you're plenty drunk. He's grinning and nodding his head to a song you don't recognize. You've only been talking for a little while longer before he's slumping against the couch.

"I liked your book," he says sleepily at one point.

"Oh?"

"Controversial," he says, grinning wickedly. "Whitman junior."

You laugh. It's way funnier now than it was back in Columbia.

"It's about you," you say, though you're not sure he heard you.

You're halfway to sleep before he speaks again. "I didn't mean what I said, back then."

"Mm?"

"That you weren't a good writer. That I was wrong about you." He's got his head tipped back, angled towards you, looking at you far more intently than anyone who's downed as much liquor as him has the right to do. "You were the spark. You were the reason we mattered."

"Mmm, no. *You* were the spark. All I did was come up with the name."

He scoffs at you. He rolls his head back on the couch, and he looks dazed. "Yeah, well, I don't matter anymore."

You mull that over for a little. It settles in your stomach in a sickly way. Maybe that's just the liquor. "You matter to me," you grouse, "I wrote a fucking book about you."

When you look at him next, though, he's asleep. Forgetting yourself, you stand up and wobble to the couch with him. Pretending this isn't what caused all the chaos from the beginning, you slump against him lazily and let yourself fall asleep.

You breathe in his scent, underneath the liquor and coffee and sweat, and god, you think you might be falling for him all over again.

You let that thought slip away. Before you can do anything to stop it, you're swallowed whole and you dream of Lucien and of love and of what-if's and maybes.

When you wake up with an incredible hangover, Lu throws a bottle of aspirin at you and passes out in bed.

You're not sure what you expected, but you're disappointed nevertheless.

With your last edition of your book, you publish it in honor of Lucien Carr. He says nothing, does nothing, but when he hands you the final transcript he gives you an unusual glance.

“So that you’ll never be forgotten,” is what you say and he deflates.

He looks at you, wounded, a bit like that scared creature you remember behind bars, and says nothing.

You expect him to ask you to remove the dedication, or just ignore it completely, like he’s so inclined to do, ignore all of it, but that’s not what he does. He buys a book from you.

“I thought you already read it,” you say, a bit snidely, even as he hands you two slightly crumpled dollar bills.

He smirks at you, eyes knowing and surprisingly contemplative, “I wanted to take another look with a different lens.”

You think about that night at his house, what you told him when you were convinced he was deliriously drunk, and you fight the inane urge to snatch the book back and throw it as far as you can.

“Dinner at my place?” he asks, apropos to nothing.

You nod numbly, cracking a slight smile. You’re not sure what to make of him, “Tonight?”

“Yeah,” he says, gesturing towards in the direction of his place for you to start walking, “I hope you like green bean casserole, because the neighbors gave me more than I ever could conceivably eat. They must think I’m half starved.”

You fight back the laughter at that, agreeing amicably as you walk towards his tiny apartment. It feels a bit like he’s justifying his behavior, but you realize you really don’t care about his intentions. You don’t think you ever have. You give him a smile, genuine and full of affection, and the look in his eyes is something akin to wonderment.

This time, you don’t need the alcohol to bring back the comfortable lull of conversation. He tells you stories of what he’s been doing since Columbia, with his flair for the dramatic fully intact. You laugh until your lungs ache.

There’s something more grounded about him, he’s the same, chaotic, captivating, but... quieter. Safer.

There’s a difference between infatuation and adoration, you think. And you think, maybe, this is it.

Before the night is done, you and Lu are sprawled on the floor surrounded by piles of books, talking excitedly and it’s Columbia all over again. Talking about what it means to be a writer, what it means to be courageous and to speak and live through words. You talk about Miller and Whitman and Shelley, and you even talk a little about Kerouac and Burroughs. Yeats’s *A Vision* lies on the floor to the right of you, and when you grab it, Lu meets your eyes. You bite.

“So, how *do* we make the world wider?”

“The true, uninhibited, uncensored, expression of self,” The edges of his mouth twitch, suppressing a smile.

“Does that mean we need to break more laws? Make some more disorder in the world of chintz and

rhythm?" A challenge.

"No," Lu says, his eyes intense, "It means you need to break your laws. Disrupt your own order. Find your own broken places."

"Yeah?" you breathe. His eyes are fixated on yours, and filled with a spark that you haven't seen in so long you almost forgot it existed. You're breathless with it.

"How else would we change the world?" He leans closer, his weight shifted on his feet, and he pulls the book from your hands. You let him. Sunlight leaks through open shades, and he's awash in it, luminous and alight. Captivated, you watch him, and he watches back.

You look away first. Whatever moment was there is broken.

Haltingly, you realize he's waiting for a response.

"We already have," you say, pretending you're not avoiding his eyes. He takes that response for what it's worth, one, two beats of silence, and another topic comes up without a hitch.

The next week, you and Lu meet up with Jack for coffee. It's the first time Jack has seen Lu since the murder, and the smiles that breaks across his face when he walks through the door is as surprising as it is fantastic.

"Carr!" Jack is boisterous on a quiet day and his voice booms through the café easily. The waitress has the great decency to just crack a small smile. Grinning, Lu rises to greet him, and is abruptly swept up in a crushing hug.

"You fucker," Jack says, all grinning laughter and typical ferocity, "A letter woulda been nice, y'know?" Jack scuffs up Lucien's hair like the little kid he is, before sweeping into a seat. Lu follows suit a moment after, looking just a bit bashful.

"Sorry," Lucien says, looking wonderfully ruffled after the surprise assault. "I figured you'd want me long gone after, well," he makes a helpless hand gesture, "Y'know, jail."

Looking much sterner now, Jack meets Lucien's eyes. "You were our friend, and we're not going to make you talk about what happened there, but we deserve *something* Lu. I don't think Al or me both want to lose two friends to that affair."

Lu is quiet, then. There's nothing much to say to that. You're about to try to change the subject just to make Lu stop looking so defeated, when Jack cracks a smile. "Well, we didn't get out scot free. Edie and I got married, and Al there published a couple damn books. How about that?"

Lu smiles back, and they're off. You order a round of shots for old time's sake. By the end of the night, you're all roaring drunk and it's all back to normal.

They tour the city again, just like old times, people watching and doing every stupid thing that they could think of. Lu climbs over a barbed wire fence just to get the best view of the sunset. You all take turns throwing stones down at people to see their reactions. Lu makes a checklist of places to crash. Despite how it's a Thursday night, the city is alive.

By the time you're all stumbling back towards your apartment the sun is beginning to peak over the rooftops. You're not all that drunk anymore, but you can't seem to stop smiling. Jack is gesturing frantically to something, and Lucien is nearly bent double laughing. You missed them.

Lu parts ways soon after, but not before he stops and approaches you. He puts a hand on your shoulder, “Al,” he says. He’s not drunk, you know he isn’t, but he’s acting like he is, “Al, you’re a dear. A real angel. Brooklyn is a bore without you. New York needs you.” He gives your shoulder a brief squeeze, and without another look he’s ambling down the street away from you.

Jack lets the silence settle for another block or two before laughing quietly. “That kid,” he says fondly, laughter in his breath, “is a mighty piece of work.”

“He’s hardly a kid anymore, Jack.”

He snorts at that. “Mighta fooled me. He’s sure acting like one.” He’s looking at you strangely. You’re instantly on edge. You try to seem unconcerned as you quirk an eyebrow.

“It’s not like doing this thing is anything new,” you say. You’ve been touring and defiling the streets of New York for years now. It’s not like Jack didn’t have a part in it anyway.

Jack’s eyeing you suspiciously now. “Don’t play dumb, Allen,” he says, the laughter fades and he’s looking at you sternly. “You can’t tell me you haven’t noticed.”

You stare.

“Jesus,” he curses. He looks at the rising sun, then at you, then at the pavement beneath his feet. The people swarming around him in the emerging rush of civilians. He rubs his face. “It’s too late for this. Too early? Listen.” He grasps your shoulder just like Lucien did, and you find him looking you in the eye. “Listen to your heart. I know you want to make everyone happy and to do the right thing but I’m telling you this. Be selfish. It’s your time. I will be behind you no matter what happens.”

“Jack, I--,” but he stops you before you can get anywhere. He shakes you by the shoulders and you can’t help but ogle at him.

“No,” he says, rather urgently. “Listen, Bill and I? We will be here for you no matter what you do and who you become. *Break your own rules, find your own broken places.*”

“Okay,” is what you say and he shakes his head, bids you goodnight and walks away into the glare of the rising sun. Something akin to worry worms through your chest, and you try not to think about it.

You walk home in the rising dawn of the new day.

Jack, Lu and you all hang out regularly again. Lucien technically has a job and set hours to work, but he seems to not let this stop him. He edits papers on the train when you leave Manhattan. He goes to work in an exhausted daze after a crazy midnight run. His flat is a chaotic mess of clothes and open books and dirty dishes and empty cups. You haven’t quite figured out how he manages to look put together and elite when he lives in a hurricane of disorder.

He manages, though. And if anything, he is just as unhinged and wild as he was back in school.

There’s no one to catch you, now. Except maybe the cops, but you’ve all gotten good at running. There’s a lot bigger things brewing in Greenwich than a couple of kids running around drunk. No one pays you mind, at least not enough to ever catch you and Lu.

There were a few close calls, though. Some weeks later, you, Lu and Jack were in a bar that got

busted by the police. There was a tip, and anyone who had anything to hide booked it. But when the police arrived earlier than anticipated, hysteria broke loose. There were people jumping out windows, and trying anything to escape.

There was about fifteen seconds before the police got violent and forced everyone into a line, and many of the stragglers took advantage of the few moments of hesitation and burst through the door. It was a dark, moonless night, and escapees were lost easily in the shadows.

You had thought there was nothing for you to hide. No drag, or drugs, or anything remotely incriminating on any of you. But, just before the crowd rushed through the open door, you caught a glimpse of Lucien grinning like the crazy fucker he is, and he grabbed your wrist. It was less than a second before you're running through the crowd like a mad man, dodging the grabbing hands of police, and laughing over the angry yelling that you left back at the bar.

You hear someone chasing you, the swearing and stomping of feet following you, but you trust in Lu. For some godforsaken reason, you just let him.

Lucien yanked you down an alleyway, and you ran and ran with him until your chest was burning and your breath came in jagged gasps. He finally stopped pulling you along when you arrived at a darkened side road in a part of town you weren't familiar with.

"I thought we didn't have anything to hide," you say once you get your bearings, gasping between each word. You were bent over with your hands at your knees, heaving breaths making cold puffs in the winter air.

"We don't," he says, grinning at you crookedly. He's slumped against the wall; head tilted back, face turned upward to the darkened sky.

"Christ," you say, laughing. The adrenaline still burning in your veins and your hands are shaking. You breathe in deeply, relishing in the thrill. This is why you love this. This is why you love him.

Somewhere lost in the rush your eyes close, and when you open them again Lucien's standing very close to you. His face is flushed and he's still breathing heavy. He's staring at you, and when you make eye contact, he talks before you find the words.

"But now we do," he says, just before he grabs you and hauls you into a kiss. His hands bracket your face and the kiss tastes like adrenaline and euphoria and there are no more words left to find.

You kiss him back, and yes, you think that you may have something that you need to hide, now.

He doesn't talk about it. You think of the kiss every time you see him, the edge of his jaw line, the curve of his lips, the elegance of his hands, the beauty of him. But he doesn't talk about it, so neither do you.

You're talking to Jack on the phone, and he tells you how he fought with Edie again.

"She's beautiful and I love her," he says, forlorn and weighed down, "But I can't. I can't be what she wants me to be. The whole world is waiting for me."

"I know," you say. You think you always knew. No one can contain people like Jack... or Lucien, for that matter. "Jack, I think I love him. I think I really, really love him." You can't stop the words and Jack just laughs.

“I know,” he says, and you think you both know what you need to do.

On the first of the year Bill tells you over the phone that he’s moving to Mexico. He doesn’t tell you why, and you don’t ask, but you know this will be goodbye for quite a while. After a couple minutes there’s only so much to say.

“Stay safe,” you say, “Manhattan needs more thinkers like you, and all of New York is eagerly awaiting your writing. Don’t do anything stupid.”

“Those are words best followed by not only the receiver, but the speaker,” Bill says, “Jack told me. As long as you are happy, I wish you the best, but as I’m sure you’re aware it is a dangerous world.”

Bill bids you goodbye before you can correct him, and he drives across the border just in time for the first snowstorm on the mountain ranges.

Lu shows up at your door one night, in the torrential rain of early spring, completely soaked through. He walks inside without waiting for you to open the door, and you watch him take off his shoes and coat unquestioningly from the sofa in the living room. His shirt and pants are still slightly damp, but he throws himself onto the couch next to you anyway.

You put the book you were reading down, because Lucien says nothing, and if anything that is an indicator that there is something wrong. You’re almost positive he got in trouble at work again. But when you look over at him, his face is stony and contemplative instead of sulky.

“Lu?” You ask, and he doesn’t turn to meet at you, he just continues to gaze distractedly at the floor in front of his feet.

“I’m leaving Manhattan. They want me to leave New York.”

“What?” You sit up so fast the book that was resting on your lap slides off and spills on the floor. You pay it no mind, and Lucien has the audacity to turn away.

“Boss says I’m doing fine, exceptional, even, but they have a need for me elsewhere.”

“Where?”

“California.”

“Fuck,” you say.

“I have to go, Allen. I’ve made it this far, and,”

“No,” you say, and you pull his shoulders around so he *has* to look at you. “No, you’re not leaving New York. Fuck that.”

“But Allen,” he says desperately, and you know he doesn’t want to go. Manhattan is his home as much as it is yours. There will never be anything like Manhattan in this world, certainly not if he’s shipped across the country. “They’re offering me a lot of money. This could be my chance, I have to take it.” He doesn’t quite meet your eyes. “I could be back, eventually,” he finishes weakly.

“Fuck,” you say, and you shake his shoulders until he *actually fucking looks at you*. “When was

money ever a concern? When did it matter? Lu this is your *home*.”

“Yes, I know,” he’s shouting now, and you remember something from so long ago, that same desperation and helplessness, “But this is my chance to matter again. This is my chance to do something. Allen, I know you don’t like it but I’m not a writer. *I have to*.”

“For fuck’s sake, Lu,” and you’re yelling, too, and you don’t care because this time, this time you’re going to stop him from doing something stupid. “You *do* matter. You matter to me, and Jack and Bill, but you matter *here*. You *are* a writer. *Stop running away*.”

“I’m not fucking running away,” he spits, and he throws himself to his feet to glower down at you, and before you know it you’re on your feet too. You’ve never resented his height advantage as much as you do now. “I did everything I needed to do here, what do you want from me, Allen? There’s nothing for me to run away *from*.”

“*You*, you fucking idiot,” you shout, “You’re running away from me and Jack and Bill but you’re running away from everything you ever wanted.” You collect yourself, quieting down enough to just talk. “Lu, do you honestly want to move across the country to help people who think they can write. We talked shit about them for hours, and now you want to *become* one?”

“That’s not... you. What do *you* want, Lu?” He doesn’t say anything this time, so you just keep barreling on before you can think about it too much. “Stay with me. Come write with me. Help me publish my work without that godforsaken company, if you must. Just. Stay, Lu.”

“Allen,” he says and you shake your head.

“No, Lu, don’t run away from me again. If there’s anyone who you don’t need to run away from it’s me. Please.”

He looks at you with wide, conflicted eyes and it’s five seconds before he’s out the door and back into the rain again. You don’t follow him.

You lay on your couch and you think maybe Bill was right. Why would he change? Why did you expect him to?

Two days pass and you pretty much give up on Lucien showing up, but that day you get a letter. You open it expecting something dire, but to your surprise, it’s a poem.

It’s a poem he wrote this time.

You show it to no one.

By the time you’re ready to publish your next book of poems, Lucien has a handful of poems he deems ready to publish. So you do the radical thing, and he lets you put his name and his poems in your book. It’s published in both your names.

When you finally get a copy of the book, you turn to him, and he smiles at you, all gratefulness and adoration. You hesitate, but you kiss him, and to your hidden glee, he kisses you back.

Slowly but surely, he moves into your flat. It starts with a couple of socks, then a hair brush. Some books, a stack of newspapers, a toothbrush. Before you know it, he spends the night more often than not.

“Lu,” you say one night when you’re both comfortably dazed with cheap beer, “You should just move in. It would save us the trouble. I’m sick of doing your laundry, anyway.”

“Okay,” he says, not even looking up from the book he’s reading and that’s the end of that.

Days pass, and you learn to not hesitate when you kiss him. Even later, you learn if you say “I love you” he’ll say it back.

And, finally, one day Jack will walk into Allen’s flat like he’s wont to do, and he’ll find Allen and Lu sleeping, entangled and so obviously in love, on the couch in the living room. And he’ll laugh, and tease them for weeks after, but he’ll really be thinking:

*It took them damn long enough.*

## End Notes

Thank you so much for reading. I do hope you enjoyed. <3

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